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ABSTRACT

The intent of the described teacher inservice education program is to provide secondary school teachers with a set of concepts for understanding their students' responses to literature. The scope and sequencing of topics in the program is outlined, and activities and resources involved are described. Ordering information for materials is included as well as a critique of the program. (JD)

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# DESCRIPTION OF TEACHER INSERVICE EDUCATION MATERIALS

## SUMMARY INFORMATION

**Title:** RESPONDING TO LITERATURE (Protocol Materials in English)

**Publication Date(s):** 1974

**Intended Users:** Preservice and inservice literature and reading teachers and teacher trainers who are interested in studying a system of concepts related to the reader's response to literature

**Grade Level(s):** Secondary school

**Number:** Group

**Primary Focus:** The intent of the program is to increase users' understanding of the way the various aspects of a literary work elicit responses in the reader, and the identification and substance of those responses.

### **School subject(s) and/or inservice topic(s) covered:**

The school subject discussed in this program is secondary level literature.

The inservice topics addressed are concepts that will enable the teacher to further understand the content of a literary work and its relation to the responses in readers.

### **What participant does in using the materials:**

The participant, as part of a workshop on secondary literature, engages in group activities, as designed by a workshop leader. The focus of these activities will be the viewing of the films defining various aspects of the literary work. Users also will participate in group discussion, both before and after viewing each film. Other activities, as suggested in the guide to the series, may be adapted to the needs of the particular training group.

**Resources:** This series consists of ten films, plus an overview film and a 45-page guide. While the overview film is necessary as a preview to the program, the others may be selected according to the purposes and characteristics of a particular group. One consideration in deciding which and how many films to use will be the amount of time available. Each film is approximately 10-15 minutes long, but the developers suggest that groups may wish to view the film a second or third time. It is strongly recommended that sufficient time be allowed for discussion. Therefore participants may spend up to four hours on each film.

**Describer critique:** Because this series is so well-structured, it manages to clearly define and illustrate the very complex system of concepts that comprise the reader's relationship with the literary text, particularly his or her responses to it. The technique of demonstrating theory through familiar literary works (which is used in all films), helps to personalize the material for the viewer and therefore more effectively illustrate the concept at hand. Technically the films are very good; content is interesting, compelling and pleasing.

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## 1.0 PURPOSES:

### Rationale

The developers' rationale for creating this series of films was that conceptual thinking about literature has traditionally dealt with the concepts of literary form, but has omitted discussion on the content of literature. In the developers' words: "It leaves out the 'aboutness' of literature: what the work has to say about life. This 'aboutness' is probably what first attracts readers to literature, and what they, in turn, want to talk about. The classroom is the appropriate arena for such talk. Teachers of literature, especially on the secondary school level, need concepts that will enable them to understand talk about content so they can feel more easy with it--with their students' response to content."

### Goals

The developers' goals for users of this product result from their felt need to provide teachers with a set of concepts for understanding their students' responses to literature: "In studying the relationship of student readers to the literary text, teachers will need to have an understanding of the various qualities in the literary work that produce responses in readers, as well as of the various kinds of responses they produce."

### Objectives

Specifically, the developers identify ten aspects of a literary work which produce responses in readers. Six of these deal with the work's contents:

- psychological content
- ideological content
- sociological content
- ethical content
- epistemological content
- ontological content.

Three address the form of the literary work:

- diction
- structure
- use of conventions.

The other concept speaks to the topic of authorial voice in the work.

Teachers' understandings of these ten concepts may therefore be interpreted as the particular objectives of this product.

## 2.0 CONTENT — Scope and Sequencing of Topics:

### Scope

The program offers ten films, plus an overview film and a 46-page booklet, Guide to the Film Series: Responding to Literature. The film titles, lengths and basic concepts are listed below:

**Overview:** "When Readers Respond." Explains how to use the individual films in the series (11 minutes).

1. "East Egg/West Egg." Readers talk about the individual and society in The Great Gatsby (sociological content of literature). That content of a work of literature which reveals how conflict and harmony make up the interaction of the individual and society is covered (8.5 minutes).
2. "Motives." Readers discuss characters' motives in Ibsen's Ghosts (psychological content of literature). That content of literature which reveals the nature of human motivation is discussed (10.5 minutes).
3. "Beliefs and Ideas." Readers talk about ideology in Roger Simon's The Mama Tass Manifesto (ideological content). That content of a work of literature which reveals the direction and limits of the thinking that underlie a body of beliefs is treated (13.5 minutes).
4. "Poetic Justice." Right and wrong in Ring Lardner's "Haircut" (ethical content). That content of a work which reveals the consequences of human acts and suggests systems of values with which to judge those acts is discussed (11 minutes).
5. "The Mind of Huckleberry Finn." Reality in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (epistemological content). That content of a work of literature which reveals the nature, extent and limitations of ways of knowing is treated (10.5 minutes).
6. "The Raft and The Shore." Reality in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (ontological content). That content of a work which distinguishes the real from the unreal is covered (12.5 minutes).
7. "Beautiful Words." Language in Shakespeare and e.e. cummings (diction). That quality of a work of literature which follows from the denotative and connotative aspects of the words in the work is covered (12 minutes).
8. "The Shape of Life." Structure in Hemingway's "Old Man at the Bridge" (structure). That quality of a work which provides a sense of the shape of conscious and unconscious experience is treated (11 minutes).
9. "Happy Ending." Conventions and literary patterns in Frost and Blake (convention). The topic covered is the quality of a work of literature which consists of those traditional and emerging patterns that reinforce the conscious ideas and feelings in the work and control the unconscious ideas and feelings (12 minutes).
10. "The Mystery of Edgar Allen Poe." Poe as revealed in his short stories (authorial voice). The topic covered is the quality of a work of literature which suggests the sense of an author as being apart from the characters in a literary work--as a person who has feelings, beliefs, ideas and attitudes, both conscious and unconscious, that find expression in the work.

### Sequence

As each film is designed to cover one aspect of readers' responses to literature--one concept--it is not necessary to use all of the films in the series, but it is a case where more is better. The developers do stress that viewers preface use of any of the films with the overview film, and if that is not possible that they read the introductory material in the guide.

### **3.0 ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES INVOLVED IN USE OF PRODUCT**

#### **3.1 Description of main inservice activities:**

The workshop setting would probably be the most viable one for use of this program. In it, participants could preface viewing a film with group discussion, raising points from those listed under the "Activities Before Viewing" section of each chapter in the series guide (a chapter corresponds to each film). Other activities suggested--for example, reading and roleplaying--may also be adopted by the group, but the principle learning activities of each session will be the viewing of the film(s) and a discussion of the viewer's response to it.

#### **3.2 Help given in use of product:**

A 46-page manual, Guide to the Film Series, Responding to Literature, is provided. It contains an introductory chapter, a discussion of the history on conceptual thinking in literature, a brief bibliography, and a very helpful question-and-answer section about using the series. Each of the films then has a chapter devoted to an explanation of its concept, a summary of its major points, and suggested activities for users.

### **4.0 EVALUATION OF TEACHER INSERVICE LEARNING**

No means of user evaluation are built into the product, although the "Activities After Viewing" section of each chapter will serve as one way of assessing users' grasp of the film content. Other evaluation may be developed by the workshop leader if desired.

## 5.0 ORDERING INFORMATION

### 5.1 Resources required/recommended for implementing product:

Time requirements are variable, and will depend on the needs of the group. The films are approximately 10-15 minutes long, and the developer suggests that users "could spend anywhere from half-an-hour to three or four hours on each film." Use of the program will require that a 16mm filmstrip projector and viewing room be available. A workshop leader will make these organizational arrangements and will oversee group discussion sessions.

Eleven films, including the overview film, are available for rental or purchase. These do not necessarily have to be ordered as a total package, and are available on an individual basis.

### 5.2 Distributor name/address:

National Resource and Dissemination Center  
Department L76  
University of South Florida  
Tampa, Florida 33620  
(813) 974-2875

### 5.3 Components/approximate costs:

| Component                                                                                                         | Purchase | Rental       | No. Req. | Reusable |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|--------------|----------|----------|
| RESPONDING TO LITERATURE - Total                                                                                  | \$1,500  | \$165/5 days | one      | yes      |
| Eleven films:                                                                                                     |          |              |          |          |
| "When Readers Respond-Overview"                                                                                   | \$160    | \$15/5 days  | one      | yes      |
| "The Mind of Huckleberry Finn"                                                                                    | \$180    | \$15/5 days  | one      | yes      |
| "The Raft and the Shore"                                                                                          | \$180    | \$15/5 days  | one      | yes      |
| "East Egg/West Egg"                                                                                               | \$125    | \$15/5 days  | one      | yes      |
| "Motives"                                                                                                         | \$150    | \$15/5 days  | one      | yes      |
| "Beliefs and Ideas"                                                                                               | \$185    | \$15/5 days  | one      | yes      |
| "Poetic Justice"                                                                                                  | \$160    | \$15/5 days  | one      | yes      |
| "Beautiful Words"                                                                                                 | \$175    | \$15/5 days  | one      | yes      |
| "The Shape of Life"                                                                                               | \$160    | \$15/5 days  | one      | yes      |
| "Happy Endings"                                                                                                   | \$175    | \$15/5 days  | one      | yes      |
| "The Mystery of Edgar Allen Poe"                                                                                  | \$150    | \$15/5 days  | one      | yes      |
| Guide to the Film Series - 1 copy included with each rental or purchase - additional copies available at \$3 each |          |              |          |          |

Complete series rentals are discounted by 10%

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## **6.0 HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT**

### **6.1 Identification of the developer:**

The series was developed by R. W. Lid and Philip Handler, both of California State University, Northridge, California. Dr. Lid, the principle investigator of the project, has written many textbooks and now teaches creative writing at California State. The series guide also credits the assistance of Louise Grindstaff, California State University (Northridge), in preparing the workshop activities, and George Hillocks, Jr., of the University of Chicago, for contributing an essay.

### **6.2 How developed and when:**

The series guide states that the program was developed through a grant from the U.S. Office of Education, Department of HEW. The developers give the following information regarding the methods they used in making the series: "In the four films in the . . . series . . . students of various grade levels, abilities, and backgrounds from high schools in Los Angeles talk about literary works and their relation to these works. The students were selected because of their willingness to be shown talking about stories and plays that they had not previously discussed in their English classes. . . . The talk in the films is unrehearsed and informal--on the spot responses to discussion topics and questions put to the students from off-camera . . . . The topics and questions put to the students were designed to elicit responses that would document readers' behaviors and, in so doing, illustrate the concept." The materials were published in 1975.

### **6.3 Evidence of effectiveness with users:**

The developers note that "guides and several field test reports are available separately for \$3 each (see 5.3 for address).

## **DESCRIber CRITIQUE**

### **Appropriateness / adaptability / technical quality:**

The purpose of this program is to provide users with a system of concepts, by which they may understand readers' responses to literature. The ten films, which succeed in illustrating these concepts, should adequately enable users to achieve that goal. The series allows for a great deal of flexibility in terms of potential users (the guide speaks to the needs of both preservice and inservice teachers) and in respect to the goals and resources of any user group. As each of the films is self-contained, the number of topics chosen and the intensity with which they are studied are considerations left to the individual user. The technical quality of the 16mm color films is good, although in a few places the sound track is faulty. This is perhaps due more to lack of enunciation by the adolescents being filmed than to poor editing.

### **Content accuracy/social fairness/community acceptance issues:**

The theories presented in this series are innovative, calling for the "liberation" of the reader. The principles behind the concepts appear to be sound; the material is well researched and carefully structured.

The films succeed in presenting a racially balanced picture. Adolescents of various racial and ethnic groups are shown, and women and men are given equal time.

### **Overall summary/comment:**

The technique used in this film series is that of the informal group interview--adolescents in groups of up to six, answering a question put to them from off-camera, reacting to it, demonstrating for the viewer their responses to a particular literary work. The young people depicted are articulate, intelligent, and genuinely interested, and should be an inspiration to any secondary school literature teacher. The viewer becomes involved both with the subject matter at hand--real, much-loved works of literature--and with the students, as learners and as people. This is an effective way of approaching the topic of the teacher's role in creative response to literature: the student responds to the work; the viewer responds to the work and the student. As in a good book, the story is not just told; it is demonstrated, and the reader (in this case the viewer) becomes an active participant in the telling.

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